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Letter dated 18 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to enclose herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the visit of the President of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, to the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 18 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the visit of the President of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, to the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

18 March 2016

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expresses its strong protest against yet another visit uncoordinated with Ukraine of the Russian President and Russian officials on 18 March 2016 to Ukraine's temporarily occupied territory — the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Attempts to celebrate the anniversary of Russian aggression against Ukraine and deceitful seizure of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol are cynical, given the grave economic, social and humanitarian problems in the peninsula. In the course of the past two years, the Russian Kremlin occupants managed to bring Crimea back to Stalin's times of authoritarian rule, lawlessness and repressions. The aggressor State continues to violate human rights in the occupied territory and terrorizes dissidents. In fact, there is no freedom of speech, media or religion in the peninsula. Systemic abuses of the rights of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatar people take place on a daily basis.

The Russian Federation, as the aggressor State, its officials and illegal occupation authorities bear full responsibility for these and other violations, in accordance with the norms of international law.

These days, as it was two years ago, the whole international community has clearly condemned the aggressor State's irresponsible actions. Ukraine and all democratic nations of the world will double their efforts to free residents of the Ukrainian peninsula from the authoritarian rule of the occupation regime and to make Crimea free again.

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Security Council

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24 March 2016

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Letter dated 21 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon the instructions from my Government, I have the honour to convey herewith a copy of the letter dated 20 March 2016 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Ibrahim Al-Eshaiker Al-Jaafari, regarding the use of chemical weapons by the Da'esh terrorist and criminal group against innocent civilians in the village of Taza in the Kirkuk province of northern Iraq, on 8 March 2016 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed Sahib Mejid **Marzooq**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 7 April 2016.

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Annex to the letter dated 21 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

I should like to draw attention to the statement (see enclosure) issued by the Government of the Republic of Iraq regarding the use of chemical weapons by terrorist gangs (the Da'esh terrorist entity) against innocent civilians in Iraq. On 8 March 2016, dozens of civilians were injured when terrorists used such weapons in the village of Tazah, which is located in Kirkuk governorate in northern Iraq.

Iraq underscores that terrorism now threatens the entire world; no social group or institution is immune to the savagery of terrorism, which has no connection whatsoever with human customs, religions or principles. Indeed, Iraq is on the front lines of the battle against international terrorism. However, in this incident, the terrorists attacked innocent civilians far away from the combat zones. This attack, the victims of which were innocent civilian men, women and children, can only be considered a crime against humanity.

I should also like to assure you, Sir, that the Government of Iraq is highly desirous of fulfilling its commitments pursuant to all customary laws, conventions and agreements, as well as the resolutions of the Security Council that prohibit the use, possession, transport and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. In view of its commitment to implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, on 14 March 2016, the Government informed the Technical Secretariat of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which is the relevant agency, in The Hague of this savage attack.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim **al-Jaafari**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq

Enclosure

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the international community to give the utmost attention to the crime that was committed in Tazah

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq calls on the relevant international organizations and the international community to give the utmost attention to the grave developments in Tazah, namely, the use of chemical weapons (mustard gas) by the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. This use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is a crime against humanity. In response, the Ministry launched intensive diplomatic efforts several days ago. The Minister for Foreign Affairs briefed the ambassadors of Arab and European States of this grave crime, while the Ministry has informed the United Nations and the Security Council, as well as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as it is the relevant technical agency.

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Security Council

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22 March 2016

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Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2228 (2015), by which the Council extended the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 30 June 2016 and requested me to report every 90 days on the implementation of the mission's mandate. The report provides an update and analysis of the conflict, the political situation and the operational environment in Darfur since the publication of my previous report (S/2015/1027), until 11 March 2016. It also presents information on the achievements of UNAMID in the implementation of its strategic priorities and its progress towards its benchmarks. Finally, the report highlights the main challenges to effective mandate implementation and describes progress towards the transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team and the exit strategy, as requested in resolution 2228 (2015).

II. Conflict dynamics and the security situation

A. Current trends and conflict dynamics in Darfur

2. Since January 2016, the intensification of fighting between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) in Jebel Marra, including aerial bombardments by government forces, has resulted in a rapidly worsening security situation and the displacement of over 105,000 people. In the meantime, the scope and intensity of intercommunal conflicts has decreased. The rate of criminality, however, almost doubled, and there was a notable increase in attacks on and harassment of civilians, including internally displaced persons, by armed men.

Fighting between government forces and rebel groups

3. In January 2016, the Government of the Sudan announced the beginning of a major military operation on SLA/AW positions in Jebel Marra, accusing the rebel movements of looting and attacking civilian, military and commercial convoys in the area. Prior to that announcement, beginning in September 2015, several statements by officials of the Government had pointed to SLA/AW as being the major threat to the Darfur peace process, while SLA/AW rejected direct talks with

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the Government and refused to participate in any negotiation process until its preconditions were met. By October 2015, following the end of the rainy season, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) had started a gradual build-up of forces in several localities in Jebel Marra, surrounding areas believed to be under the control of SLA/AW. UNAMID observed SAF units, which had been redeployed in El Fasher and Nyala during the rainy season, beginning movements towards central Darfur. For their part, SLA/AW elements entrenched in remote areas in the foothills of Jebel Marra launched occasional ambushes on convoys of government forces, especially on the roads between El Fasher, Nyala and Zalingei. Throughout December, there were reports of such clashes between government forces and SLA/AW in the vicinity of Guldo in Central Darfur, which UNAMID has been unable to verify owing to access restrictions.

4. The starting point of the fighting was an SLA/AW ambush on an SAF convoy near Dabeneira, located north of Golo in Jebel Marra, on 2 January. The attack, which UNAMID was not able to confirm owing to access restrictions, reportedly resulted in the killing of 7 SAF personnel and the injury of about 20 others. Following the attack, additional SAF infantry units, the Rapid Support Forces and Arab militias converged on Jebel Marra.

5. The offensive started with a series of aerial bombardments from 14 to 16 January in several areas in Central and North Darfur. On 14 January, UNAMID observed a government aircraft dropping three bombs near Samra village, located south-east of Sortony. SLA/AW informed UNAMID that no casualties were recorded. Some media sources indicated that there had been aerial bombardments in North Darfur on 14 January that targeted areas near Barbis and Samra villages, located north-east and south-east of Sortony respectively. UNAMID was informed of, but could not confirm, additional air strikes that reportedly took place in Daly Duko and Tabarat villages, west of Tawila on 15 January. In Central Darfur, UNAMID observed an aerial bombardment north-east of its team site in Nertiti on 16 January. This was followed by a report of bombings in Koro, east of Nertiti, on 16 and 17 January, and in Kaninga and Kutrum on 22 and 23 January. Again, UNAMID was unable to confirm these reports owing to access restrictions.

6. Given the intensity of the fighting, SLA/AW took refuge in the mountainous areas located between Nertiti and Rockero. As a result, SAF claimed that it had taken control of the SLA/AW strongholds in Saboon El-Fag, Feina and Gulobei in South Darfur, securing the major access road into Jebel Marra. Subsequently, SAF launched ground attacks along two axis with the apparent objective of containing SLA/AW: the areas east, north-east and south-east of Nertiti (Kaninga, Golo, Kutrum, Sorong, Golol, Kwila and Boldon), and the areas north-east and north-west of Nertiti (Burgo, Rowata, Emalin Figi, Boli and Boulay).

7. The fighting continued on 22 and 23 January, with a battle reported in the vicinity of Nertiti, following which SLA/AW claimed that it successfully repulsed SAF attempts to advance towards Kalokitting. Subsequently, SLA/AW and SAF issued contradictory statements on the military situation in Jebel Marra. SLA/AW claimed that it had repelled the Government's offensive and seized hundreds of military vehicles and large quantities of weaponry. The Government, in contrast, denied these claims and maintained that it had seized control of most of Jebel Marra, repulsed the SLA/AW attempt to recapture Fanga Suk and killed key

SLA/AW field commanders. On 22 January, SAF also announced that it had captured Kaguro.

8. While the Government's offensive continued, President Bashir, on 9 February, made several personnel changes in the command of SAF, including the appointment of Lieutenant-General Emadeddin Mustafa Adawi as the new Joint Chief of Staff and of Lieutenant-General Yahya Mohamed Khair as his Deputy. In the aftermath of those appointments, government forces further intensified their operations.

9. The Government claimed further gains by capturing most of the advanced positions of SLA/AW that pose a constant threat to the strategic garrisons of Rockero and Nertiti, thus limiting the ability of SLA/AW to undertake and coordinate counter-attacks. These include Kaguro, North Darfur, as well as Rowata, Emalin Figi, Kutrum, Boldon, Boli and Boulay, Central Darfur. On 16 February, UNAMID received further unconfirmed information that SLA/AW elements had recaptured Kutrum and Kalow villages, east of Nertiti following intensified fighting. UNAMID was informed by local sources that between 12 and 28 February, a government aircraft had bombed Jertanga, Kwila, Marra, Kutrum, Boori, Maral, Kudey, Tado and Moro villages, located east and north-east of Nertiti. In this regard, on 14 February, local sources informed UNAMID that government forces had attacked SLA/AW positions in Kwila village. There were additional unconfirmed reports that a government aircraft had conducted aerial bombardments in Marra on the same day. On 21 February, in Nertiti, representatives of the Straha camp for displaced persons stated that on 20 February, a government aircraft had dropped bombs on the Boori and Maral areas north-east of Nertiti, leading to civilian displacements. On the morning of 22 February, UNAMID observed an aircraft dropping eight bombs on mountain ranges near Tui village, located south-east of the Sortony team site. Subsequently, UNAMID was informed by local sources that additional bombings took place in the vicinity of Nertiti, in Tado and Moro villages on 26 February and Marra and Kudey villages on 28 February. According to local sources, a total of 10 civilian deaths due to the airstrikes on 13, 26 and 28 February were recorded. Owing to access restrictions, UNAMID could neither confirm this number nor the potential number of other civilian casualties in Jebel Marra.

10. At the time of writing of the present report, fighting continues. According to media sources, government forces reportedly continue to be confronted with asymmetric, highly mobile rebel forces using geographical dispersal to limit the impact of the bombings and slow down the advance of the SAF infantry.

11. The Justice and Equality Movement-Gibril Ibrahim (JEM-Gibril) and the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minnawi (SLA/MM) were inactive in Darfur during the reporting period. On 7 March, UNAMID received unconfirmed reports that an SLA/AW field commander and about 100 of his troops surrendered to government forces in Zalingei. This was followed by additional media reports that a group of fighters claiming to be defectors from JEM-Gibril arrived on 8 March in Nyala, South Darfur, from South Sudan.

Local conflicts and intercommunal violence

12. Meanwhile, conflicts at the community level took place in West and South Darfur during the reporting period, contributing to further tensions between the Arab and non-Arab communities. In West Darfur, on 9 January, reportedly in retaliation for the killing of a herder in the Wadi Rati area east of Mouli village, a

group of armed Beni Halba attacked and looted the Massalit villages of Mouli and Mouli Kodomi. In the attack, 13 people were killed, 27 were injured and a large number of Mouli residents, mainly women and children, were displaced. Some 1,000 inhabitants sought refuge in Abu Zar camp for internally displaced persons near El Geneina, and an additional 6,000 persons fled to neighbouring Chad. On 10 January, a large group of about 1,000 Massalit, who had been displaced from Mouli and neighbouring villages a day earlier, staged a protest in El Geneina, West Darfur, which resulted in unrest, including the looting of the West Darfur Governor's office. Ten Massalit were reportedly killed in clashes with the Rapid Support Forces and another ten were injured.

13. In the aftermath of these incidents and amid reports of further mobilization of armed militia, the Government deployed additional security personnel to El Geneina and Mouli to contain the situation and launched investigations at the state and federal levels. Of the 12 affected Mouli villages, 2 were completely abandoned and 3 were nearly abandoned. In the other seven villages, 60 to 70 per cent of the original population has since returned.

14. The second conflict in West Darfur, between the Awlad Rahma of Northern Rezeigat and Gimir, was triggered by an incident of cattle rustling by Awlad Rahma against the Gimir in the Rumalia area north of Mornie on 16 January. During the pursuit of the perpetrators, the Gimir killed one Awlad Rahma in Nibiaga village the following day. In response, the Awlad Rahma mobilized and attacked several Gimir villages in the Umtajok area, partially burning down three villages and looting the market in one of them, before moving to Shuktak and Kamkama villages to steal more cattle. The attacks, which continued on 18 January against the villages of Karnga, Karna Tama, Tajona and Kosti, resulted in the displacement of 64 Gimir households to areas around Umtajok. Most of them have returned, but inhabitants do not venture outside settlement limits owing to the continued threat posed by armed Awlad Rahma in the vicinity. With the intervention of the commissioner of Kerenik locality, Gimir leaders paid *diya* (blood money) to the family of the deceased Awlad Rahma. Notwithstanding the payment, the Awlad Rahma subsequently attacked four villages in the Umtajok area, as the result of which 3 Gimir were killed and another 11 were injured.

15. In South Darfur, two clashes took place between the Fallata and Salamat tribes. On 7 and 14 February, confrontations ensued over cattle theft in the Al-Nadif area of Buram, in which 32 Fallata and 3 Salamat were killed and 14 Fallata and 8 Salamat were injured. On 22 February, government authorities arrested 55 members of the two communities, including tribal leaders, 35 of whom remain in detention in Nyala prison pending prosecution. A number of tribal leaders from both sides have also been relieved of their positions by the Government. The *Ajaweed* (mediation) Council of the Gimir native administration managed to mediate an agreement on cessation of hostilities between the two parties. In addition, 25 Habaniya were arrested in connection with those clashes. The *Wali* (Governor) of South Darfur announced a disarmament process to mitigate intercommunal conflicts in the area.

Criminality and banditry

16. Violence committed by organized criminals, armed nomads and militia groups taking advantage of the overall law and order and security vacuum remained a

significant concern for the population in Darfur. A total of 505 criminal incidents and 126 casualties were recorded, compared with 385 incidents and 376 fatalities in the previous period. The most common crimes included armed robberies (81), attempted robberies (28), assaults and harassment (154), burglary and break-ins (48), looting (17), abductions (25), arson (9), shooting attacks (79), ambushes (25), threats (17) and livestock theft (22). The absence of government authorities in remote areas had an impact on law enforcement, and the inefficient judiciary system continued to contribute to a culture of impunity and repeated crimes, while abduction remained a coercive method adopted by the various tribes in Darfur to obtain the payment of *diya* claimed from other communities.

17. There were 25 instances of sexual and gender-based violence targeting women and girls reported during the period. Attacks on women were characterized by extreme physical abuse, with women attempting to escape or resist attack being beaten, tortured or killed. The attacks targeted all age categories, including very young girls and elderly women. In most of the incidents, the victims were engaged in livelihood activities. As noted in several previous reports, lack of confidence among the victims and their families in the Government's capacity to conduct proper investigations, the absence of government police in some areas, fear of retribution and the social stigma attached to being subjected to sexual violence continued to cause under-reporting of cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

B. Political developments

National dialogue

18. The national dialogue continued to be the main focus of political debates in the Sudan. The end date of 10 January 2016, initially announced for the closure of the National Dialogue Conference taking place in Khartoum, was extended to 10 February in a bid to provide more time for the various committees to finalize their discussions and recommendations, as well as to convince those outside of the process to join. On 5 February, President Bashir announced that the dialogue would end soon.

19. The New Justice and Equality Movement led by Mansour Arbab Younis, a JEM-Gibril breakaway faction, joined the process in early January. On 4 February, in El Fasher, the Government signed a peace agreement with the Democratic Justice and Equality Movement led by Mohammed Ibrahim Azraq, the Sudan Liberation Army led by Salih Adam Ishag, and the Sudan Liberation Army wing of Nour Al-din Zurg. These factions subsequently joined the National Dialogue Conference on 7 February. In total, 39 armed movements, mainly small splinter factions of the major Darfur armed groups and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North have joined the National Dialogue Conference.

20. With the exception of the Popular Congress Party led by Hassan al-Turabi, whose death on 5 March may also impact the process, all major opposition parties, including the National Umma Party, the Communist Party of the Sudan and the Reform Now Party, as well as all major Sudanese armed movements, continue to boycott the process. They have continued to maintain that an enabling environment for a genuine and credible dialogue is not in place.

21. The six subcommittees of the National Dialogue Conference completed their debates and submitted their recommendations to the secretariat on 28 February. Consensus was reached on several issues, including Sudanese identity and guidelines for the constitutional review process. On the issue of transitional arrangements, most of the participants not belonging to the ruling National Congress Party called for a transitional Government. On 28 February, the governance committee recommended that a four-year national reconciliation government be established within three months of the endorsement of the National Dialogue Conference recommendations.

22. At the time of writing of the present report, the national dialogue proceeds, with no specified end date and no clear indication as to the next steps to be taken.

Preparations for the administrative referendum in Darfur

23. On 12 January, the Darfur Referendum Commission announced that the referendum on the administrative status of Darfur would be conducted from 11 to 13 April 2016. The aim of the referendum is to determine the administrative status of the region, namely, whether Darfur would be one region or retain the current five subregional divisions, in accordance with the terms of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. The Commission also indicated that national and international organizations would be invited to monitor the referendum. A two-week registration period started on 8 February, with the final list of registered voters to be published by 20 March. The Darfur Referendum Commission established 1,400 centres, distributed in 64 localities in the five states of Darfur. The Commission announced that all Sudanese, including non-Darfuris who would have been resident in Darfur for the previous three months, would be eligible to register and vote. The eligibility criteria exclude Darfuris living outside of Darfur for six months prior to the commencement of registration.

24. The criteria for voter eligibility have proven to be controversial among some political parties and rebel signatories to the Doha Document, who argue that all Darfuris should be allowed to participate in the process. Sudanese political parties participating in the National Dialogue Conference and Darfur stakeholders, namely the Popular Congress Party, the National Liberation and Justice Party and the Liberation and Justice Party, have also expressed concern about what they describe as the unsuitable timing of the process, given the fighting and displacement in Jebel Marra and elsewhere in Darfur. Many representatives from the camps for displaced persons have also refused to participate and have even called for boycotts of the process. Notwithstanding this opposition, the Darfur Referendum Commission announced on 26 February that the number of registered voters in the five states of Darfur had reached 3,583,105, out of a total of 4,588,300 eligible voters. On 5 March, the Referendum Commission began the phase of voter register publication, complaints and appeals.

C. Humanitarian situation

25. The reporting period saw a deterioration of the humanitarian situation in three areas in particular: Jebel Marra; Anka in North Darfur; and Mouli and Umtajok in West Darfur. Remarks by senior officials regarding the closure of camps for internally displaced persons in 2016 also raised significant concern, while the

general operating environment for humanitarian organizations remained highly challenging.

Jebel Marra

26. The escalation of fighting between government forces and SLA/AW, including a combination of intensive and coordinated air strikes and ground attacks by government forces, has led to large-scale displacement, especially from mid-January to late February, in North, Central and South Darfur.

27. In North Darfur, 105,900 newly displaced people, of whom 90 per cent were women and children, arrived at four locations; over 62,192 in Sortony, 34,197 in Tawila, 2,500 in Kabkabyia and 2,317 in Shangil Tobaya. UNAMID provided immediate support to the new arrivals while broader humanitarian assistance was being mobilized. A humanitarian team reached the area on 7 February, and the first 24-truck aid convoy arrived on 11 February. Notwithstanding the dispatch of further assistance later in February, the humanitarian situation at Sortony remains of great concern, with logistical challenges, including lack of space, water resources and sanitation, compounding an already dire situation.

28. The magnitude of the displacement in Central Darfur remains unknown. Humanitarian organizations have been largely unable to verify reports of significantly higher displacement in other locations in Central Darfur, or to respond to new needs. However, 600 new arrivals have been identified in camps in Zalingei town. The Sudanese authorities reported that 2,750 people had arrived in three locations — Guldo, Thur and Nertiti. The Government of the Sudan also reported that it had provided food, plastic sheeting and clothing to affected people in Central Darfur, although the specific number and locations of people assisted were not clear. In South Darfur, local authorities reported registration of just over 155 new internally displaced persons at Kass camp and 835 at Deribat camp as at mid-March. More new arrivals may have integrated within the camp.

Anka area, North Darfur

29. The situation in and around Anka, North Darfur, remained precarious, as the result of a series of attacks by Northern Rezeigat on Zaghawa villages, and the continuous presence of various armed groups. Torching of homes and looting during militia attacks in December was initially reported to have affected up to 10,000 people, many of whom were left without food, water or shelter. The initial assistance was provided through an international non-governmental organization that was present on the ground. Throughout January and February, UNAMID leadership, in close coordination with humanitarian actors, engaged the authorities on access to Anka. The volatility of the security situation forced the cancellation of humanitarian missions to the area that had been planned for the period from 19 to 21 January in order to scale up the response.

Mouli and Umtajok areas, West Darfur

30. The authorities in West Darfur reported that the events in and around Mouli on 9 and 10 January had led to the displacement of 6,000 people into El Geneina and towards the Chad border. Initially, humanitarian organizations were not granted access to the newly displaced in El Geneina, nor were they able to reach Mouli and

surrounding areas. State authorities reported the dispatch of humanitarian assistance.

31. An inter-agency mission to Mouli and nearby villages eventually took place on 18 February, by which point the authorities had reported that all the displaced people had returned to the area. There was a continued lack of basic services in the affected villages. The National Charity Office reportedly provided assistance to some villages, but most of the affected localities did not receive any humanitarian assistance.

32. In the Umtajok area, following engagement by UNAMID with SAF and local authorities, an integrated field protection team was dispatched on 15 February. The team found that most of the displaced persons had returned to the area and identified an urgent need for food, emergency shelter and health and other assistance. Owing to the threat of further attacks and harassment by armed militias, the inhabitants in Umtajok are unable to move freely to undertake daily livelihood activities.

Situation in the internally displaced person camps

33. During his visit to Darfur on 28 December, Vice-President Hassabo Mohammed Abdul Rahman announced that the war in Darfur was over and that by early 2016 the 2.6 million internally displaced persons would either have to return to their places of origin or resettle where they were now. This created tension among the displaced population and the various tribal militias, the latter because of the possibility that they might lose the farming and grazing lands gained during the war, which they had taken from the displaced population.

34. Humanitarian organizations have emphasized their willingness to work with UNAMID, the authorities, development actors and displaced people themselves on durable solutions to protracted displacement in Darfur, in line with applicable international frameworks and best practice. They have stressed, however, that voluntariness is an essential element of durable solutions. The conditions and timing of the closure of displacement camps must also be determined in close consultation with the communities involved and on the basis of accessible information. Security and the availability of basic services in proposed return or resettlement areas are also of critical importance.

D. Operating environment

Attacks on the mission, restriction of movement and denial of access

35. During the period under review, there was a slight reduction in criminal attacks on UNAMID properties and personnel. In total, 44 criminal incidents, including 18 incidents of break-in, burglary and theft, 2 robberies of national staff, 1 attempted robbery, 4 attacks on UNAMID convoys, 2 carjacking incidents, 1 assault of a UNAMID national staff member, 1 threat, 14 incidents of stone throwing and 1 arrest and release of a national staff member of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs were recorded, compared with 29 in the previous reporting period. In order to improve the security of United Nations and other personnel, UNAMID continued to intensify patrols and the provision of armed escorts for movement in El Fasher and all critical team sites. Increased coordination

with government security agencies also continued in order to more effectively pursue the perpetrators of attacks against the mission.

36. UNAMID escorts were also subject to attacks by militia or armed bandits. On 1 January, a UNAMID patrol searching for a stolen World Food Programme (WFP) truck was fired upon by approximately 50 armed SLA/AW elements near Kutum team site. The attackers were armed with heavy weapons mounted on trucks. The peacekeepers returned fire, but no casualties were reported. On 7 January, a convoy travelling from Kutum to Anka to prepare the visit of the Deputy Joint Special Representative to the area was ambushed by an Arab militia. One peacekeeper was injured and arms and ammunition were stolen. In another incident, on 14 January, UNAMID troops escorting a rations convoy had to fire warning shots at armed men trying to divert two trucks from the main convoy on Djarido road, near Kutum. On 9 March, an unknown armed group on gun-mounted vehicles attacked a UNAMID patrol from Kutum to Djarido in North Darfur. One peacekeeper was killed and another injured.

37. Restrictions of movement and denials of access and clearances continued to be imposed on UNAMID by Military Intelligence or the National Intelligence and Security Services. As a result, UNAMID could not undertake critical security and assessment missions in areas of active fighting or intercommunal violence, such as Mouli, Anka or the Jebel Marra area. This also included, on 22 February, the denial of clearance of a special flight for the Joint Special Representative from El Fasher to Zalingei and Nertiti, Central Darfur.

Visas and customs clearances

38. In January and February 2016, the Government rejected a further five visa requests. These were in addition to the 97 visa requests rejected in 2015, of which more than 30 were for substantive civilian staff. These vacancies, in particular in the Human Rights and Protection of Civilians Sections and the Joint Operations Centre, continue to seriously affect the ability of the mission to fulfil its mandate. By the end of February, 126 visa requests remained pending.

39. By mid-March, more than 200 shipments of United Nations-owned equipment and contingent-owned equipment had been blocked in Port Sudan, pending customs approvals. These included some shipments dating as far back as April 2015. Critical United Nations-owned equipment included communications equipment, military equipment, printers, tools and electrical items. Critical contingent-owned shipments included armoured personnel carriers, vehicles, spare parts and self-sustainment belonging to troop- and police-contributing countries. The resulting shortages are severely hampering the ability of UNAMID troops to communicate, conduct robust patrols and protect civilians, as well as themselves. The delays in the issuance of approval have resulted in demurrage charges, reimbursement to troop- and police-contributing countries for equipment that has not been used and additional costs for the troop- and police-contributing countries to inspect and repair the sensitive equipment lying idle in Port Sudan.

40. To resolve these blockages, UNAMID held two technical-level meetings with the Government of the Sudan in Khartoum on 13 January and 23 February. On 10 January, the Government released 75 of the 130 containers of food supplies for UNAMID troops that had been in Port Sudan since November 2015, and a further 55 on 29 February. In addition, at the request of the Government, UNAMID

submitted, at the end of February, the list of priority visa requests for substantive staff. On 1 and 2 March, a total of 19 visas were granted, including for four humanitarian affairs officers and one human rights officer. This brought down the total of pending visas to 107.

Access denials and restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors

41. The number of criminal attacks against humanitarian organizations decreased significantly during the reporting period. Only 3 incidents were recorded, compared with 41 in the previous reporting period. The incidents included a carjacking (with recovery), two robberies and the abduction of a WFP-contracted driver and his truck on 30 December. The driver was released in the Kutum area on 21 January but the truck remains unrecovered.

42. Access remained a challenge for humanitarian actors, particularly in areas where UNAMID escorts were required for the provision of assistance. Delivery was affected by the denial of travel authorization by the Government to humanitarian actors and the mission, as well as by lengthy procedures and bureaucratic impediments. All humanitarian access to newly displaced persons in Central Darfur state was denied. Humanitarian actors were also unable to secure timely access to people displaced from Mouli and surrounding areas into El Geneina in January. The volatile security situation in Anka and its surroundings has continued to prevent humanitarian assessment teams from reaching the area and has prevented the scaling up of life-saving humanitarian assistance, more than three months after militia attacks were reported.

III. Mandate implementation

A. Support for an inclusive peace process

High-level mediation

43. On 11 January, a meeting facilitated by UNAMID and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) was held in Paris, between the Darfur rebel movements and the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, at the request of the former. The meeting was attended by Gibril Ibrahim and Minni Minawi, leaders of JEM/Gibril and SLA/MM, respectively. During the meeting, the two movements committed to producing a joint position paper highlighting their views on the role of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur in the mediation process, as well as their proposals on the way forward. In the joint position paper, which they submitted on 17 February 2016, they requested additional consultations, with the participation of UNAMID and the AUHIP, in Doha. The Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator travelled to Doha on 15 February for consultations with the Government of Qatar on the next steps regarding the mediation process.

44. While SLA/AW continues to reject any talks with the Government, informal meetings between the Government and JEM-Gibril and SLA/MM took place in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, from 23 to 25 January. UNAMID and AUHIP jointly facilitated the meetings, at which participants discussed contentious issues in an AUHIP draft cessation of hostilities document submitted to the parties in November

2015. The meeting ended without an agreement, but the parties committed to continuing the talks.

45. With regard the national dialogue, despite the decision of the Government of the Sudan to move ahead with the Khartoum-based National Dialogue Conference, AUHIP, with the support of UNAMID, continued its efforts in support of an inclusive process. Pursuant to the communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 25 August 2015, AUHIP engaged the Sudanese parties extensively on the challenges facing the negotiations, calling upon them to focus on the strategic objective of holding an inclusive national dialogue as the basis for resolving the conflicts and political crisis in the Sudan. On 8 February, President Thabo Mbeki proposed a new round of strategic consultations as a way out of the impasse and invited the Government of the Sudan to attend a meeting in Addis Ababa on 18 March to engage the Sudanese Revolutionary Front and the National Umma Party on the strategic challenges facing the negotiations on the cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the two areas and matters related to the national dialogue.

Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur

46. In furtherance of the implementation of the power-sharing provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, President Bashir, on 25 January, appointed several members of the signatories of the document, namely the National Liberation and Justice Party and the Liberation and Justice Party, to the diplomatic services as ambassadors, ministers plenipotentiary and counsellors.

47. The second phase of the Darfur internal dialogue and consultations process continued in December, with four meetings held for Darfuris based in Khartoum, each attended by 100 to 200 representatives from various stakeholder groups. The discussions focused on the root causes of the conflict in Darfur, including intercommunal violence, sharing of power and resources, justice and reconciliation, and the role of Darfur communities in this regard. On 21 February, the Government released SDG 6.4 million, equivalent to $1 million, or 50 per cent of its pledged contribution, which will enable the process to resume in March 2016.

48. From 10 December 2015 to 18 January 2016, UNAMID, in collaboration with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, supported by other stakeholders, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and WFP, conducted a demobilization exercise of armed movements that are signatories to the Doha Document and the 2006 Abuja Agreement in West and Central Darfur as part of the implementation of the final security arrangements set out in the Doha Document. A total of 1,482 ex-combatants, including 189 from the Liberation and Justice Movement and 1,293 from signatories to the 2006 Abuja Agreement, were demobilized. UNAMID provided technical assistance and logistical support, including establishment of the demobilization centre, screening and verification of the combatants, medical assistance and payment of reinsertion assistance. WFP provided items to each ex-combatant as part of the reinsertion package.

B. Protection of civilians

Provision of physical protection

49. During the reporting period, the military personnel of UNAMID conducted a total of 19,417 patrols, comprising 6,330 routine patrols, 7,318 short-range patrols, 442 long-range patrols, 2,281 night patrols, 344 humanitarian escorts and 2,702 logistics and administrative escorts, covering 6,133 villages and 2,087 displacement camps. In addition, police personnel conducted 8,323 patrols, compared with 7,359 patrols carried out during the same months in 2015, including 4,132 confidence-building patrols to camps for internally displaced persons and an additional 4,191 patrols to respond to security needs, particularly those of women and children engaged in livelihood activities outside their camps.

50. Following the fighting in Jebel Marra and the subsequent large-scale displacements, UNAMID established protective areas near displacement sites (Sortony, Tawila and Kabkabiya in North Darfur and Nertiti in Central Darfur). The mission also constructed an emergency reception site in Sortony and reinforced its military and police presence to conduct day and night patrols in order to maintain security and law and order near the camps for internally displaced persons, making maximum use of the 2,531 peacekeepers and 71 armoured personnel carriers deployed (237 troops and 6 armoured personnel carriers in Sortony; 420 troops and 8 armoured personnel carriers in Kabkabiya; 435 troops and 9 armoured personnel carriers in Zalingei; 377 troops and 15 armoured personnel carriers in Nertiti; and 363 troops and 12 armoured personnel carriers in Tawila). In addition, UNAMID leadership actively engaged the authorities on the crisis in Jebel Marra.

51. To address security challenges in Anka, discussions with the authorities are ongoing for the establishment of a temporary operating base in the area. In West Darfur, UNAMID advocated for the deployment of additional government police forces in the area affected by intercommunal violence. The mission also took measures to enhance regular confidence-building patrols using the capacities of the Saraf Umra team site.

52. UNAMID continued to address the threat posed by explosive remnants of war in Darfur. Clearance teams of the United Nations Mine Action Service are deployed across the five states of Darfur, with particular focus on areas where armed hostilities and inter-tribal conflict have been reported. General hazard assessments were conducted in 42 villages. The teams located and destroyed 4,241 items of unexploded ordnance and 1,565 rounds of small arms ammunition.

53. UNAMID reached a total of 10,823 beneficiaries through 173 explosive remnants of war risk education sessions. The risk education took place in areas identified as high priority owing to their level of contamination and through accident reporting. Beneficiaries included 2,841 men, 2,500 women, 2,666 boys and 2,816 girls.

Logistics and security support to humanitarian operations

54. Since 1 January, UNAMID has provided 110 armed escorts to facilitate the pre-positioning of humanitarian assistance, the undertaking of missions by humanitarian partners related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the monitoring of the humanitarian and protection situation. Emergency relief items

from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes were delivered, with the assistance of the mission's escorts, to displaced persons seeking protection near UNAMID sites in Sortony, Tawila and Kabkabiya. UNAMID also provided logistical support and security to the interagency missions undertaken in Anka and in West Darfur.

55. Particular emphasis was placed on the quick provision of support to humanitarian partners in their delivery of relief items, advocacy for humanitarian access and registration and verification of internally displaced persons in accordance with the mandates of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and UNAMID. As the United Nations responded to the situation in Jebel Marra, Anka, Mouli and Umtajok, close coordination was maintained and appropriate distinctions were made between the role of humanitarian organizations operating under the leadership of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and that of UNAMID, particularly with respect to the provision of logistics support and security to humanitarian operations.

Promoting a protective environment

56. During the reporting period, UNAMID documented 132 new incidents of human rights violations and abuses, involving 338 victims (including 14 children), compared with 123 incidents involving 242 victims during the previous reporting period. The violation of the right to life accounted for 41 cases involving 43 victims; the right to physical integrity accounted for 44 cases involving 121 victims; sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence in the form of rape, accounted for 25 cases involving 51 victims (including 14 children); and there were 16 cases of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention involving 111 victims. There were also 6 cases of abduction involving 12 victims. UNAMID confirmed the occurrence of 72 cases of human rights violations and abuses, while the remaining 60 cases, though unconfirmed, are highly likely to have occurred, on the basis of corroboration from various sources, including victims. Of the 132 reported incidents, 47 cases, involving 140 victims, were reported to have been perpetrated by government security forces and proxy militia. The remaining 85 cases, involving 192 victims, were perpetrated by armed men, often described by the victims as "Arabs".

57. While some of the incidents have been directly linked to the armed clashes between SAF and SLA/AW in Jebel Marra, others were opportunistic attacks by unidentified armed men, often described by victims as Arabs, seemingly taking advantage of poor security situations. As highlighted in the previous reporting period, the lack of capacity of law enforcement agencies and the limited presence of judicial institutions are among many challenges that the victims of crime and human rights violations and abuse face in their quest for the investigation or prosecution of perpetrators. UNAMID findings have shown that, even when police investigations had taken place, there were rarely any prosecutions or sentences.

58. As noted above, sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, continued to be reported, with a total of 25 cases involving 51 victims (including 14 children) reported during the period. In most cases, victims and witnesses continued to show reluctance in providing information crucial for prosecution and reporting purposes. In the rare cases in which information was available from the testimony of victims, responses from law enforcement

institutions remained inadequate. UNAMID findings indicated that, generally, perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence were described by victims as armed "Arabs", who often acted with impunity.

59. The National Commission for Human Rights, with support from the Government of Japan, has begun expanding its presence across the Sudan. On 2 February, the Commission's first sub-office in Darfur was inaugurated in El Fasher. This is a positive step towards enhancing the capacity of the Commission to monitor and report on human rights.

60. UNAMID continued to engage with and support transitional justice mechanisms as important factors for peace and security in Darfur, as outlined in the Doha Document. UNAMID organized a two-day training session focused on human rights and transitional justice for 30 rural court judges and native administrators in South Darfur on 31 December 2015. These human rights training efforts complemented earlier training on mediation of community conflicts, with the objective of making mediated settlements registerable by the judiciary and therefore binding on the parties.

61. Intensified training and the creation of awareness on the part of the rural court judges concerning international human rights standards and mediation of conflicts has significantly improved the performance of the rural courts. The rural courts are now increasingly sensitive to gender equality and human rights in their work, which includes limited criminal jurisdiction. Plans are under way for UNAMID, in collaboration with the Judicial and Legal Sciences Institute, to develop training modules for a sustainable capacity-building programme for the rural court judges in Darfur.

62. The mission also held a meeting with the Special Prosecutor for Darfur Crimes on 30 December 2015 to follow up on actions taken to address impunity. The Special Prosecutor informed the mission that there were 16 cases under trial in different states of Darfur, of which 6 cases had been concluded. On 26 January, UNAMID monitored a trial of low-ranked security personnel who had committed crimes outside their official functions and a second trial of 13 alleged members of the SLA/AW armed movement. The Special Prosecutor has not yet prosecuted any cases involving senior Government or security personnel.

63. UNAMID worked with the judiciary in Darfur in conducting assessments to identity gaps that will inform planning for the re-establishment of the criminal justice system to promote a protective environment in remote areas. The chief judges in Central, North and South Darfur involved the mission in their efforts to restore the criminal justice chain in remote areas and re-establish rural courts in South and Central Darfur. UNAMID is providing support, using the quick-impact project modality, to the reconstruction of the police, prosecution, prison and court in Kutum.

64. Severe overcrowding of prisons, by more than 200 per cent, and incidences of prolonged pre-trial detention in Nyala prison led to 33 new prisoners being detained in crowded conditions at the Nyala police station, as a stopgap measure. UNAMID recommended to justice officials the introduction of non-custodial sentences, probation and early release for women imprisoned for minor offences, especially when accompanied by children. UNAMID has continued to advocate for the reopening of Buram prison, which has a holding capacity of 420 prisoners. Buram

prison was closed in 2009 and has since been refurbished through UNAMID/UNDP funding. UNAMID-supported legal aid desks in Ardamata prison in El Geneina, which is overcrowded by 300 per cent, helped reduce the number of pre-trial detainees from 50 to 39. In Zalingei, the office for the prison legal aid programme was completed in February. To date, 18 appeals cases for convicted prisoners have been processed and submitted to court. In addition, 12 cases for pre-trial detainees have been processed and submitted to the criminal prosecution department.

65. In order to strengthen community policing in Darfur, UNAMID held 39 security coordination and 110 community safety committee meetings with the participation of the Sudanese police, UNAMID police, non-governmental organizations and community leaders. The goal of those activities was to enhance community-oriented policing, especially in and around the displacement camps, and strengthen the relationship between the UNAMID police and the Sudanese police, as well as improve access to justice and promote the rule of law.

66. The implementation of 22 community-based labour intensive projects approved for the 2014/15 fiscal year has been successfully completed. The projects covered vocational skills training, livelihood support skills, nursing and midwifery, school construction and civic development. It also included projects on gender responsiveness and projects for people living with disability. Thus far, 80 such projects have been implemented and have directly benefited a total of 6,296 at-risk youths, including 4,342 males and 1,954 females in over 40 communities across all states of Darfur, since the 2011/12 fiscal year.

C. Local conflict mediation

67. UNAMID continued to focus on early warning, mediation, capacity-building for tribal and community leaders, and support to local authorities in their conflict resolution efforts. UNAMID convened a total of 30 meetings (10 in South Darfur, 9 in East Darfur, 4 in North Darfur, 4 in West Darfur and 3 in Central Darfur), engaging local stakeholders to facilitate peaceful coexistence between farmers and pastoralists. UNAMID funded and facilitated meetings between farmers and pastoralists in Nyala North locality, South Darfur; Assalaya locality, East Darfur; and Graida locality, South Darfur, on 27 January, 31 January and 2 February respectively. Similar meetings were conducted at four locations in Shearia locality, East Darfur, on 9, 13, 23 and 25 February. Over 440 participants attended the meetings. With financial and logistical support from UNAMID, a peacebuilding workshop was held in Mershing locality, South Darfur, on 1 February for 201 participants, while another peaceful coexistence and social cohesion seminar was held in Labado, East Darfur, on 4 February for 60 participants. UNAMID provided technical and logistical support for eight peace campaigns facilitated by officials of Mellit locality and the Mediob native administration to encourage peace between the Berti and the Zayadiya and to prepare the communities in Mellit and Al Kuma localities for a State-planned reconciliation conference.

68. Following the incidents of 9 and 10 January in Mouli and El Geneina in West Darfur, UNAMID held several meetings with community leaders, including the Sultan of the Maasalit, the Chairman of the Reizeigat Shura Council and the Amir of Beni Halba. With logistical support from UNAMID, a joint task force comprising the Shura Councils of Reizeigat and Massalit travelled to West Darfur from

19 to 23 January to consult and engage in a dialogue with the communities and native administration leaders in preparation for a peace and reconciliation conference between the two communities in March.

69. UNAMID integrated field protection teams conducted a number of visits to areas affected by intercommunal violence. The teams visited Um Kadosa on 15 February and the villages of Shatok and Khor Saial in Umtajok, West Darfur, on 23 February, to assess the security situation and the consequences of the recent clashes between Awlad Rahma and Gimir. Following the clashes between Beni Halba and Massalit, teams also conducted visits in the cluster villages of Mouli, namely, the villages of Birtajouna and Ojeje on 17 February and the villages of Hilat Zagawa, Hashaba and Hilta Farig on 22 February.

IV. Implementation of the recommendations of the strategic review

A. Transfer of mandated tasks and cooperation with the United Nations country team

70. In accordance with the request for a transfer of some of the UNAMID tasks to the United Nations country team stipulated in Security Council resolution 2228 (2015), a joint rule of law programme is being finalized. Based on the UNAMID rule of law transition plan, this programme will reflect the United Nations country team's areas of work in this sector, as well as joint initiatives with UNAMID, and include resource requirements to ensure the sustainability of the agreed approach.

71. With respect to the transfer of tasks related to HIV/AIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Resident Coordinator's Office in Khartoum began developing a concept note in collaboration with UNAMID for mobilizing the resources necessary to take over outreach activities from the mission.

B. Implementation of the integrated strategic framework

72. UNAMID and the United Nations country team continued to implement the revised integrated strategic framework endorsed in December 2014, focusing on the three strategic priorities of the mission and consistent with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2012-2016, the humanitarian strategic response plan for 2014 and the Darfur Development Strategy. The joint coordination structures tasked with the implementation of the framework and the transfer of tasks finalized their work plan. The lack of funding to support the effective implementation of the Darfur Development Strategy remains a key issue. On 9 December 2015, the first instalment of $10 million for 12 joint projects was received by the United Nations Darfur Fund. A Darfur Development Strategy joint planning and assessment mission to Darfur was carried out in February 2016 to engage counterparts, ensure that the projects were presented to the Darfur Regional Authority and the Government of the Sudan in a harmonized way and kick-start implementation.

V. Exit strategy

73. In compliance with resolution 2228 (2015) and the communiqués of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 22 June and 31 July 2015 regarding the UNAMID exit strategy, the African Union, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan held a strategic tripartite meeting in the margins of the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa on 28 January. The meeting was part of the trilateral discussions started in 2015 aimed at reaching an agreement on the framework of cooperation for achieving the benchmarks of UNAMID as the basis for its eventual exit from Darfur. During the meeting, it was agreed to hold further discussions on 22 March in New York in the margins of the meeting of the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security.

VI. Financial aspects

74. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/261 B, appropriated the amount of $1,102.2 million for the maintenance of the Operation for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. As at 29 February 2016, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNAMID amounted to $467.0 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2,986.3 million. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 31 October 2015, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 September 2015, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VII. Observations

75. Three months ago, I reported on the unstable security situation in Darfur, the uncertainty in the peace process and the challenges facing UNAMID on the ground. I noted in my previous reports that clashes between parties to the conflict had decreased substantially. I warned, however, that there was a high risk that military campaigns would resume after the rainy season, resulting in new displacement and further suffering of civilians. Regrettably, since January 2016, the fighting in Jebel Marra has confirmed this prediction.

76. I am gravely concerned about the impact of the ongoing fighting in the Jebel Marra area on tens of thousands of civilians who have been forced to flee their homes. UNAMID and humanitarian actors have thus far not been able to verify the magnitude of displacement in Central Darfur, where most of the fighting has taken place, owing to severe restrictions on movement by the Government of the Sudan. I call on both the Government and SLA/AW to immediately put an end to the fighting in Jebel Marra and to allow UNAMID and aid agencies unfettered access to people in need, wherever they may be located.

77. The mediation process led by AUHIP and supported by UNAMID is essential in this respect. Clearly, there can be no long-term military solution to the conflict in Darfur. In this regard, I commend the efforts of AUHIP and the Joint Special Representative to revitalize the Darfur peace process through engagement with the non-signatory movements. I encourage all parties to immediately resume direct talks

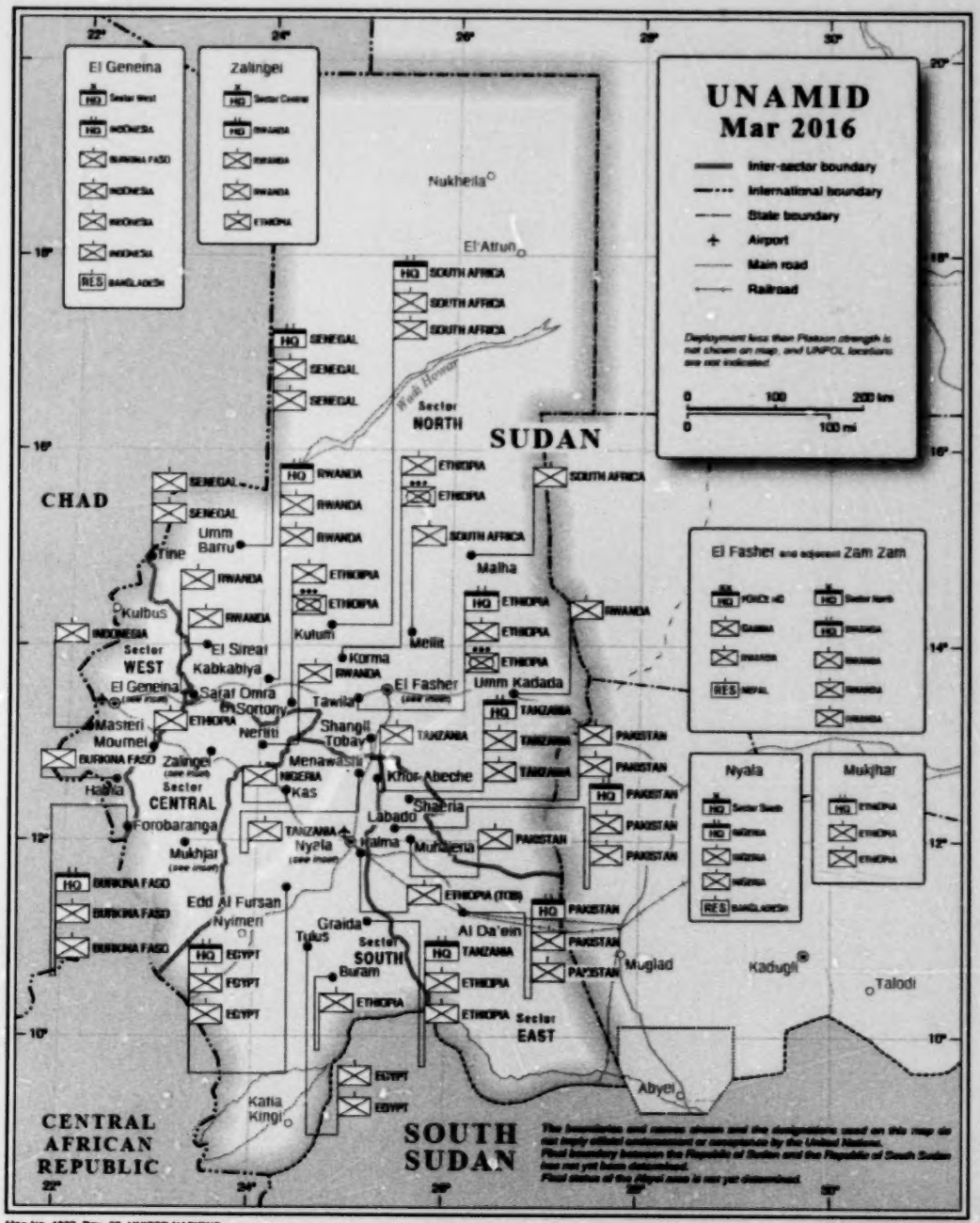
in good faith and without short-term calculations, and strongly urge SLA/AW to join the peace process without any preconditions. The Government and the armed movements must agree on a cessation of hostilities as a first step to end the suffering of the people of Darfur, leading to a comprehensive political solution to the conflict.

78. Over the past couple of years, West Darfur has been comparatively calm and stable. The recent incidents in Mouli and Umtajok have exposed deep divisions among communities, which, if not properly managed, will reverse the gains made towards peace and security, plunging the state back into a cycle of violence. The importance of a successful outcome to the proposed peace and reconciliation conference cannot be overemphasized.

79. Many of the root causes of the intercommunal conflicts in Darfur are related to land. The issues of access to land and the management of scarce resources between pastoralists and nomads have not been adequately addressed. I once again urge the Government to address these root causes in a systematic manner to prevent simmering tensions between groups from escalating when small incidents of criminality are perpetrated by individuals.

80. I wish to reiterate my commitment, in line with the decisions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, to fulfilling the benchmarks of UNAMID, which provide the frame of reference for its exit strategy. Towards this end, I request the Government's full support in the discharge of the mission's mandate. I call on the Government to remove any impediments to the mission's operations and freedom of movement. The tripartite mechanism, bringing together the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations, provides an important venue for resolving issues pertaining to UNAMID mandate delivery and discussing progress towards its exit strategy.

81. In conclusion, I would like to thank the Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator, Martin Uhomoibhi, and all the women and men of UNAMID, the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations, who, in the face of considerable challenges, pursue their continuous efforts to improve the lives of the people of Darfur. I also commend my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Haile Menkerios, and Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for their efforts to resolve the conflicts in the Sudan. I also wish to express my gratitude to the leadership and personnel of UNAMID, the United Nations country team and humanitarian partners who continue to work tirelessly towards the pursuit of sustainable peace in Darfur in often very difficult conditions.



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Letter dated 21 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 20 March 2016 from the Secretary-General of the Frente Polisario, Mohamed Abdelaziz, addressed to the Secretary-General (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Rafael **Ramírez**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 21 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

We are following, with legitimate concern, the recent serious developments in Western Sahara, whereby the Kingdom of Morocco has confronted the United Nations and its Security Council with a series of faits accomplis that reveal a clear intention to defeat all the efforts that the international community has been making for more than 40 years to complete the decolonization of the last African Territory that remains on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Given these developments, the Frente Polisario wishes to reiterate its full confidence in the efforts of the United Nations, under your high leadership, to achieve a peaceful solution that guarantees the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly and the resolutions of the African Union.

The Frente Polisario reaffirms its full commitment to the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Frente Polisario, which throughout the process has demonstrated a positive attitude of cooperation with all United Nations bodies and MINURSO, nonetheless has repeatedly drawn your attention and that of the Security Council to the risks that Moroccan obstruction has posed to the peace process for a number of years.

The Frente Polisario strongly condemns the irresponsible decision of the Kingdom of Morocco to expel MINURSO personnel, and holds Morocco fully responsible for the consequences of this action.

The Frente Polisario opposes this illegal and unilateral decision by Morocco, which seeks to distort the mandate of MINURSO in order to turn the Mission into the protector of the Moroccan occupier or to limit that mandate solely to the maintenance of the ceasefire, in violation of the agreements concluded between the two parties and the decisions taken by the international community.

The Frente Polisario would like to recall that the MINURSO premises are located not in Moroccan territory but in the Territory of Western Sahara, which is included in the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. As a result, the Territory is not under Moroccan jurisdiction and Morocco has no power to expel members of the Mission from the Territory of Western Sahara.

The decision by Morocco to expel personnel comprising the civilian (political and administrative) component of MINURSO ultimately spells the end of the mandate for which the Mission was established. By implementing this dangerous decision, Morocco is violating Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and contravening the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It should be recalled that the two parties' respect for the ceasefire is contingent on the referendum to be organized by the civilian component of MINURSO. Through this decision, Morocco is fuelling tensions and pushing the Sahrawi people to resume the armed struggle.

The Frente Polisario reaffirms its commitment to the settlement plan signed by the two parties, Sahrawi and Moroccan, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in 1991, which resulted in the deployment of MINURSO.

The Frente Polisario urgently calls on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities as the representative and highest authority of MINURSO and the guarantor of the task with which the Mission was entrusted, namely the organization of the referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara.

The people of Western Sahara, who have been waiting more than 40 years in suffering and exile, have placed their trust in the United Nations, which must in return fully shoulder its responsibility in relation to the Territory and people of Western Sahara.

Should this dangerous situation persist, the Frente Polisario reserves the right to take such measures as may be necessary to address it.